

Forum Discussion Questions

What enduring concerns do you have about the Complete College Tennessee Act?

Information Dissemination

- What steps have been taken to promote a kind of state-wide higher education literacy? By this I mean there are several misconceptions about what do faculties do? What roles do universities play in securing jobs? My sense is that if the public were engage by a candid discussion about higher education there will be a succinct more buy-in about CCTA.
- Legislators must be available link as to public information flow. We are not at present involved.
- How will the colleges and universities determine which business partners they engage in the program development process?

Funding and Formula

- Sustaining reform in decreasing budgets environment.
- Can the goals be achieved with the resources available?
- To the extent the Outcome-Based formula becomes a reallocation tool rather than a mechanism to fund improvements in outcomes, sustainability may not be a possibility.
- Universities and community colleges in the same funding pool. (I must admit Russ Deaton's presentation this morning eased some of my concerns.)
- Sufficient aid for access.
- Will we have the funding to support these changes?
- Funding distribution with a finite (reducing) pot of money.
- If funding is to be a zero-sum game, does the formula encourage cooperation or competition?
- Inadequate state resources to provide full incentive funds as a result of the new formula. If state support is not there to reward those who perform the CCTA will not have maximal impact.
- Will the regional supporters of higher education institutions accept funding based on outcomes and mission differentiation?
- Output-based funding is very much needed but without new funds (Challenges are centered upon how to improve overall funding rather than just reallocating existing funding) the concerns in maintaining quality while providing more credentialed citizens without the same state support.

Sustainability

- Can we keep it operational for 5 to 10 years? If we can, it will make us a much better group of universities and community colleges.
- Will we have the will to stay the course over the long haul of implementation?
- Will you have the legislative and higher ed leadership to withstand attempts to do these "as they have always been done"?

Quality Assurance

- Quality of transfer credits, if non-regionally accredited colleges adopt same course numbering.
- Quality –assurances ensuring that worth of degree is not diminished. Maybe look at student's success in the marketplace (job market).
- The key word is that this act needs to be "enduring" and that is the challenge – enduring – already addressed. Hope that "quality" and "rigor" is not sacrificed to push to complete.
- Are community college instructors (regular and adjunct) being made aware that the academic rigor in community colleges must match four year universities?
- Dramatic improvement in graduation rates will not be likely without establishing more rigorous admission standards, particularly in low-performing institutions.

- To what extent will the CCTA encourage systems to allow more institutional autonomy? Is this a good thing? Not a good thing?
- Projection of curriculum being included in legislation. Is the CCTA the camel's nose under the tent?
- Beyond ensuring that students can complete their educational objectives, what will the state do to ensure that students are learning?

Miscellaneous

- How do we sustain the strong collaboration already developed between universities and community colleges when separated into a community college system has the potential to create a silo and end the culture of working together at a substantive level?
- How can we best deal with:
 - Recognizing within mission differentiation the need for access for underserved ("subpopulations")
 - Problem of "rate of change" makes it difficult for high performing units on any given metric to show marginal improvement.
- Will the ACT have a negative impact on the quality of education? What metrics will be used to check on this issue?
- Would love to hear from institution leaders and faculty reps around the table on where are highest pressure points.
- The effects for those universities who take as many or more transfer students than beginning freshman. Will community colleges and universities water down the curriculum to get more people to graduation?
- It appears that we continually view academic success as degree completion (associate or bachelor). How can the post-secondary credential from the Technology centers be incorporated into Tennessee's growth in production of postsecondary credentials.
- Efforts to increase first year retention efforts. Degree completion problematic without student retention.
- The increase in degrees produced is implemented not only with public institutions, but also with private higher education institutions. What steps have been taken to achieve buy-in from private institutions for the CCTA?

Whether they are addressed in the Complete College Tennessee Actor not, what are the largest challenges Tennessee higher education will face over the next five years?

Affordability

- Affordability as cost of college is shifted from state appropriations to tuition and fees.
- The obvious - funding.
- More with less.
- Funding.
- Funding at the state and federal level will be a challenge. The tendency has been to compensate by raising tuition and fees instead of efficiency and/or adjusting academic programs.
- Affordability will always be an issue.
- The cost to the student and to the state to achieve a degree or a certificate.
- The availability of resources to generate the additional degreed folks.
- Affordability - student aid funding accelerated programs at community colleges.
- Tuition rates are increasing faster than scholarship awards like the HOPE lottery scholarship.

This provides less financial incentive for high achieving students to stay in the state of Tennessee to complete postsecondary education.

- Affordability and resulting increase in part-time students.
- Inadequate capital funds for buildings and infrastructure and capital maintenance. Tennessee needs to have an innovative new look at an approach to funding these important needs.
- Creating the capacity (physical and operational) to effectively deal with the increased enrollment we need to achieve the goals of the Public Agenda.
- Having funding to attract and retain high-quality faculty.
- Student ability to address the cost of an education. Psychological effect of students/state seeing education as a private good rather than a public benefit.
- The prospect that state tax funding of higher education will be as unreliable as it has for the past 15.
- How do we get the state to make more significant investments in higher education?
- Increasing needs for a more highly educated workforce combined with much less money available for higher education.
- Wise use of \$\$ and affordability questions. We need all postsecondary bound students to leave high school with at least 18 hours of dual credit (mostly tech), dual enrollment and A.P.
- Sufficient student aid for access.

Quality

- The most significant challenges will be the increasingly widening chasm between the expectations students have for colleges and universities and the ways in which these expectations are inconsistent with existing university practices (i.e.: expectations of professors).
- The ability to preserve quality of the educational experience - which to some degree includes a discovery experience not solely a pre-determined structured program.
- Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship while minimizing bureaucratic controls.
- Preparedness of high school graduates.
- Preparedness. New high school graduation requirements are great, but it's going to be tough to get students to where they must be.
- Attempting to address so will have to wait and see. Increase level of college readiness - hopefully TN diplomas project will do this. But once get to college, maintain rigor.
- To remember college is more than workforce development.

Campus Implementation

- Campus leaders fully realizing the need to increase student retention and degree completion.
- The commitment to implementation.
- Invidious competition among campuses as they see the CCTA as a zero-sum game.
- Faculty and key staff retention.
- Culture of outcomes versus status quo.
- Bringing the "new direction" to the "front line" as part of the teacher/student relationship.
- Faculty concerns - how to reassure them about maintaining quality and program discipline integrity in the face of needing more graduates - getting students through more rapidly.
- How will higher education deal with a large infusion of entering students? What role will technology play?

Miscellaneous

- Achieving gains in efficiency and completion both on the five year cycle.
- Allowing private colleges and proprietary colleges to out-serve students and make public institutions a second or third tier in the education system.
- CCTA politicized and dismantled through special interests and institutional lobbying.
- Gaining support from local communities.
- Public buy-in to keep initiatives going.
- Changing cultural expectations about the need for postsecondary education.

What benefits / serendipities have you seen on campus as a result of the new statewide focus on college completion? What are you optimistic about? What do you see as the real opportunities for improvement in Tennessee higher education over the next five years?

Implementation for Student Success

- Focus on student success and efficiency to degree completion.
- Has increased awareness of importance of graduation rates.
- The transfer act, if successful, could be a national model for improving degree productivity.
- UT and TBR are working together to solve articulation and transfer problems. Creation of unique transfer path between UT/TBR - unique approach resulting in building relationships between faculty in discipline areas in both systems including CCs.
- Articulation work among publics and non-profit privates has been stimulating and cooperative.
- Increased graduation rates and retention rates.
- Better articulation with community colleges.
- Emphasis on graduation as well as more emphasis on admitting prepared students for higher education.
- Better serving students in Tennessee.
- Increased graduation rates, but are they in the fields that Tennessee needs for jobs?
- More recognition by faculty and academic departments that the critical importance of advising and students support.
- So far institutions seem to be embracing the notion that student success is the overarching objective. Creative thinking about allocating resources in a way that really matters for achieving completion is taking place across all institutions in both systems.
- We have created a graduation task force to examine policy and practice; we have completed a study of our academic inventory and made a significant number of proposals for the creation of new embedded certificates; we are quite confident about our ability to increase the number of completions (short-term and long-term).

Implementation for Campus Success

- Rewarding performance - remember "it's performance that counts"
- We are "redesigning" the entire college - our focus is on doing more, doing it better and doing it for less - cannot forget the "better" part
- Optimistic that the Act invites principled campus ingenuity. Resourcefulness is empowered.
- More initiatives among faculty for outcomes of increased retention.

Collaboration

- I am optimistic having have discussions with college presidents.
- I am optimistic about the unified support in the education community, business community and state policy makers for CCTA.
- Community-wide excitement about the potential for positive change.
- Connection in between sector levels.
- Unified approach at all levels (P-12, Tech centers, community colleges, 4-yr schools) to increase access, articulation, graduation success in market.
- Optimistic that higher education systems will see value of collaboration and joint problem-solving.
- Collaboration, compromises, cooperation and consideration among faculty as universal transfer paths are being developed.

Miscellaneous

- An enhanced focus on our role in economic development.
- Remedial education for 12th grade courses.
- One issue is considering how goals can be better met by revising the structure of education in Tennessee. TBR-UT set up is breeding ground for redundancies.
- There is an excitement and also a wait-and-see attitude.
- Would like to hear more on the from institution level participants in the room.
- More focus.
- Encouraging institutions to apply outcomes accountability to colleges, even departments. Is this a good thing? Not a good thing?
- Most optimistic about the change in the funding formula. This will push the system to better support business and the older (over 25 years old) student population.
- The state's ability to truly link outcomes with funding, particularly when new funding is available.